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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 5 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Bahrain to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly and has the honour to refer to the decision of the Kingdom of Bahrain to present its candidature for election to the United Nations Human Rights Council, at the election to be held during the sixtieth session of the General Assembly on 9 May 2006.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is a firm advocate of the promotion and protection of human rights and attaches great importance to this issue, both domestically and internationally. Bahrain has been at the forefront of regional human rights development in the Middle East, and has substantial experience of human rights on an international level, in particular at the United Nations, having served on the Human Rights Commission from 2002 to 2004. Bahrain also has a large and vibrant community of non-governmental organizations, a number of which are concerned with human rights issues.

The Kingdom of Bahrain strongly supports the new Human Rights Council as an effective and important international instrument to promote and protect human rights around the world, and is committed to the universal standards and values that will underpin the Council's work.

The Kingdom of Bahrain therefore believes that Bahrain's election to the first United Nations Human Rights Council would make a significant contribution to the Council's work, and would enable Bahrain to use its wide experience of human rights protection to make a valuable contribution to developing the Council's work.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 5 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Bahrain to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

I have the pleasure of circulating the Kingdom of Bahrain's voluntary pledges and commitments on human rights (see enclosure). It is my conviction that the United Nations plays a vital role in the promotion and protection of human rights and that the establishment of the new Human Rights Council constitutes the cornerstone to further develop that role.

(*Signed*) Tawfeeq Ahmed **Almansoor**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Enclosure

Aide-memoire

The Kingdom of Bahrain has decided to present its candidature for membership in the Human Rights Council of the United Nations in the elections to be held during the 60th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on 9th May, 2006.

The Kingdom of Bahrain considers the protection and promotion of human rights one of the main priorities of its internal and foreign policy agenda. It assumes that they are key pillars for the national development.

Since 1999, the Kingdom of Bahrain has undertaken a major reform programme, focusing particularly on human rights issues, which are enshrined in and protected by its Constitution and will continue this emphasis in the future.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is committed to the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. All national plans and programmes include, and will continue to include, human rights dimensions.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is a party to the following major human rights Conventions:

- Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the two protocols thereto:
  - Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography (CRC-OPSC)
  - Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (CRC-OPAC)
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
- Slavery Convention, 1926
- Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948
- United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime, and its two protocols:

- Protocol to Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children
- Protocol against the Smuggling of migrants by Land, Sea and Air.

Human rights agreements have been implemented and will continue to occupy a central place in Bahrain's domestic policies in order to maintain an environment conducive to the promotion and respect of human rights.

In addition, Bahrain is actively studying becoming a Party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, both of which the Government has referred to Parliament.

The Supreme Council for Women, established in 2001, along with a number of non-governmental women's societies and other organizations, are adopting innovative strategies for the advancement and empowerment of women politically, economically and socially. These bodies aims to achieve full participation of women in the workforce, enabling them to occupy leadership and decision-making positions in both the public and private sectors, as well as changing stereotyped view of women and eliminating all forms of discrimination against them.

Transparency in human rights issues is extremely important in the promotion of human rights, and the growing and strengthening civil society in the Kingdom plays an important role in this process. More than 368 non-governmental organizations have been established, including a numerous human rights groups, among which are the Bahrain Human Rights Society, which recently carried out an inspection of Bahrain's prisons, and a local branch of Amnesty International, a number of which deal specifically with human rights. The Kingdom of Bahrain will continue to work to promote its NGOs, especially those dealing with human rights.

As part of its national strategy, the Kingdom of Bahrain has hosted many seminars and workshops on human rights, and will continue to do so in the future, in order to increase public awareness of specific human rights issues.

In 2005, Bahrain hosted the second session of the Forum for the Future, where, for the first time, civil society sat alongside G8 and regional Foreign Ministers, and discussed their views on major issues. The Forum resulted also saw the establishment of the Foundation for the Future and the Fund for the Future.

Cooperation between the Government and national and international NGOs has resulted in the implementation of training programme for law enforcement officers on basic principles of human rights.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has continued to contribute financially to the Office of the United Nations Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as to other programmes, on an ongoing basis. Such contributions are intended to strengthen the work of the Office and the implementation of its programmes. The Kingdom of Bahrain will continue such contributions, where possible, in the future.

Should it be elected to membership of the Human Rights Council, the Kingdom of Bahrain will assist in the creation of a conducive international commitment for cooperation in human rights.

The Kingdom of Bahrain, through its membership in the Council, will be committed to supporting United Nations human rights machinery, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Kingdom of Bahrain will commit itself to the principles of consultation and dialogue and cooperation with all United Nations members in general, and Human Rights Council members in particular, in a spirit of transparency and openness, in order to strengthen human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide.

The Kingdom of Bahrain will support the Council, as the principal international organ, in a clear manner that will achieve the universality of human rights as a whole.

Human rights issues, in the view of the Kingdom of Bahrain, should be treated equally and in a just manner, with cooperation to ensure national and international harmonization between different cultures, religions, civilizations and different historical backgrounds. The Kingdom of Bahrain, as it has always done, will continue to promote respect, tolerance and solidarity.

The Kingdom of Bahrain will continue its cooperation and coordination with Non-Governmental Organizations, which are genuine partners in developing the work of the Council in general, and on human rights in particular.

The Kingdom of Bahrain will work with other actors within the international community to develop and strengthen human rights, through the implementation of human rights principles and standards enshrined in regional and international agreements.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is committed to the United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/251.

The Government of Bahrain is actively cooperating with the special mechanisms as well as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights which resulted in the following visits:

1. Visit by the former High Commissioner, Mrs. Mary Robinson in 2002;
2. Visit by the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention in 2001.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has initiated a major campaign to combat trafficking in persons. A draft law is being prepared and, in a spirit of international cooperation, a visit is envisaged in the near future by the Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.